

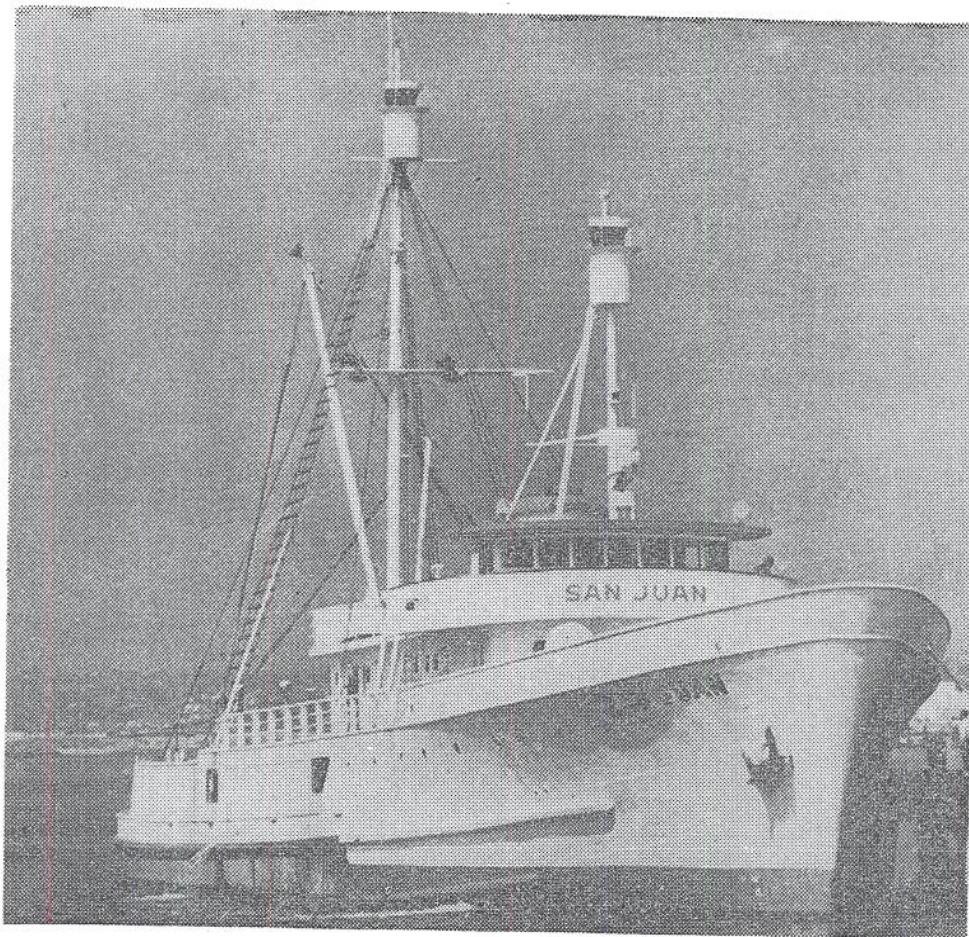
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Associated Press

San Diego-based tuna clipper San Juan, reported hit by Peruvian machine-gun fire.

Peruvians Attack U.S. Fishing Boats

By A. D. Horne
Washington Post Staff Writer

A Peruvian patrol boat forced an American fishing vessel into port yesterday, and a second U.S. ship reported being pursued and damaged by machine-gun fire some 50 miles at sea as the Pacific tuna wars flared again.

The captured boat, the Mariner out of San Diego, was released after its captain paid.

what the Peruvian Embassy here called "a symbolic fine" for violating the 200-mile territorial limit claimed by Peru and its neighbors on South America's Pacific coast.

The incident was the 75th South American seizure of a U.S. fishing vessel since 1961, according to the American Tunaboat Association in San Diego.

But for the Nixon Administration it was the first test of its firmness in a crisis involving a reported attack on U.S. citizens and property abroad.

With Congressmen from both coasts calling on the Administration to "get tough," Secretary of State William P. Rogers called Peru's Ambassador, Fernando Berckemeyer, to the State Department. According to Department spokesman Robert J. McCloskey, Rogers told the envoy that "armed attacks against U.S.-flag fishing vessels" are "wholly unjustified" and he requested that Peru "release the seized vessel and prevent the recurrence of armed attacks."

The Peruvian response was an embassy statement insisting that the only shots fired were warning rifle shots, that "no damage or harm has been done either to the ships or to the crews" and that "irresponsible and sensationalist rumors have given this episode a magnitude which the facts do not support."

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U.S. Boat Reports Attack by Peruvians

PERU, From A1

The incident seemed to add a new irritant to relations between Washington and Lima, already badly strained over the seizure last fall of the American-owned International Petroleum Co. by Peru's new military government. J. Wesley Jones, U.S. Ambassador to Lima, has been in Washington for consultations over the IPC dispute, which faces an April 9 congressional deadline for a cutoff of U.S. economic aid (currently about \$4 million a year) and sugar quotas (worth an estimated \$45 million a year) to Peru.

Congress has made the cutoff of aid and sugar quotas mandatory within six months after an uncompensated seizure of U.S. business property abroad. In the case of IPC, the military government of President Juan Velasco Alvarado has used the crisis to mobilize nationalistic support, and has responded to the cutoff threats by establishing diplomatic relations with Moscow and vowing to broaden its trade.

Only yesterday, Reuters reported, a home-made bomb exploded outside the U.S. Embassy in Lima, accompanied by a leaflet denouncing "lack of the IPC." No damage was reported in the explosion, nor in four identical incidents elsewhere in Lima.

First reports of the fishing boat incident came from Congressional offices, informed by tuna fleet headquarters in San Diego. According to these messages, which continued throughout the day, this was what happened:

The U.S. tuna fleet—nine boats in all—was stationed overnight about 50 miles off Peru's north coast, well outside the 12-mile fishing limit claimed by the United States, Russia and most other major fishing nations. The Peruvian patrol boat joined the fleet before dawn and at about 7:30

a.m. it sent a boarding party aboard the Mariner. No shot was fired, as the boat's captain, Joseph Luis of San Diego and its crew of 13 headed for the nearby port of Talara.

The Peruvian vessel then moved toward another tuna boat, the San Juan. Its skipper, Juan Virissimo of San Diego, headed out to sea, pursued by the faster gunboat which, he reported, circled his ship, firing "more than 50 shots at us."

August Felando, manager of the Tunaboat Association, said the San Juan reported 27 bullet holes in its pilot house, plus damage to its radio shack and crew quarters. The 17-man crew remained below decks, Felando said, and no one was injured. Finally, he said, the patrol boat tried to board the San Juan, but gave up the attempt when two of the other U.S. tuna boats sailed toward it as if to ram the Peruvians.

These reports brought tough statements from Congress.

House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee Chairman Edward A. Garmatz (D-Md.) said, "It is time for the State Department to retaliate and get tough."

Sen. George Murphy (R-Calif.) wired President Nixon denouncing "this outrageous threat to American lives and property" and asking "protection, military or otherwise" for the fishermen. A similar call went to Secretary of State Rogers from Rep. Thomas M. Pelly (R-Wash.), author of two amendments to protect U.S. tuna fishermen.

One of Pelly's amendments, invoked against Ecuador after its seizure of a U.S. fishing boat last December, requires a cutoff of U.S. military aid after such seizures. The other, yet to be invoked, reduces U.S. economic aid to the seizing country by the amount of the fine it levies on a U.S. ship.